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ABSTRACT

A national survey of 1,493 humanities faculty at 156 two-year colleges was conducted in spring 1975. The colleges included in the sample were carefully selected in terms of locale, control, emphasis, size, and age, and the faculty sample included proportionate numbers of full- and part-time faculty members. This paper compares political science instructors in the sample to the total group of faculty. Nine percent (139) of the total sample indicated law/government as their field. Most of these people predominately taught political science or administration of justice, but in many cases, they also taught history and even social science courses. Most of these instructors held their highest degree in political science (61.9 percent), but significant numbers had majored in history, education, and law. As a group, the political scientists were fairly similar to the total sample. Almost all (89.2 percent) were white/Caucasians, and the largest percent--87.8--were males, compared with the ratio of 66 percent males in the total sample. Many (23.7 percent) said they were working on their doctorates. Information of age, research, professional development, affiliations, and teaching duties is also summarized, and compared to the characteristics of the total sample. (Author/NHM)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF TWO-YEAR COLLEGE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS

Florence B. Brawer

February, 1976

This paper details the characteristics of faculty teaching political science in two-year colleges. The data were drawn from a nationwide survey conducted in Spring 1975 by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, Los Angeles under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF TWO-YEAR COLLEGE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS

A plethora of material is available regarding characteristics of college and university faculty members. Less is known about instructors in particular disciplinary areas--and still less about men and women who teach in two-year colleges. What about political science instructors? In what fields were their highest graduate degrees? How many class hours do they typically teach weekly? Are they satisfied with their jobs? How do they feel about their students? About curriculum and instruction? Who are their reference groups? Some data are now available.

The Study

A national survey of 1493 people teaching the humanities in 156 two-year colleges--carefully selected in terms of locale, control, emphasis, size and age--was conducted in spring 1975, by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges. The faculty sample was drawn to include proportionate numbers of both full-time and part-time instructors. Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the project revealed data on such constructs as concern with the humanities, concern for students, reference groups, and personality characteristics, as well as the more typical demographic dimensions. In this paper the political science instructors in the sample are compared with the total group of faculty in art, anthropology, foreign language, history, liberal arts/drama, literature, music, philosophy, religious studies, and social science/ethnic studies.

Demographic Characteristics

Of the 1493 people who taught the humanities in the selected colleges, 139 (9%) indicated law/government as their field, 246 (16%), history. Most of these people predominately taught political science and/or administration of justice, and in many cases, particularly in the smaller colleges where there is frequent doubling up of teaching responsibilities, they also taught history and even various courses falling under the rubric of "social science." Of the law/government people with whom this paper is concerned, 26.6% had themselves been students in two-year institutions. By far most of these instructors held their highest degree in political science (61.9%) while significant numbers had majored in history (24.5%), education (10.8%), and law (10.8%).

The age pattern of these instructors is scattered. Most were between 31-35 years, next 36-45, and then 26-30. Almost all (89.2%) were white/Caucasians, and 40% indicated that there were over 200 books in the homes in which they had been raised, with the next highest number of books falling in the 26-100 range. By far the largest percent were males--87.8%--compared with the ratio of only 66% males in the total sample. Many political science instructors--23.7%--indicated they were currently working on the doctorate. This group, coupled with the 15.8% of the humanities faculty now holding this advanced degree, suggests a significant increase in the percent of doctoral degree holders in two-year colleges in the near future.

Experience

In the past, two-year colleges drew their faculties heavily from

the secondary schools. But of the eleven specialties into which the humanities people surveyed were divided, law/government claimed the fourth highest (51.8%) who had no years at this level, and the very highest (61.9%) who indicated they had never been an instructor or administrator in a four-year college or university beyond the level of teaching or research assistant. Of those who did claim such previous experience, the greatest clustering centers on the 20% who had spent 5-10 years at the secondary level and the 13.6% in the four-year college/university group, who also noted 5-10 years experience there. Again, 5-10 years was the most popular time spent as a faculty member within a two-year college, with years ranging from less than one to over 20--a time span that reflects the ages of these instructors. And once more, 5-10 years was the modal time these instructors had spent in their current institution.

Twenty-six point six percent of the sample were chairpersons of their divisions or departments, most of whom had spent 1-2 years in this position. Directors of special programs accounted for 18.7% and slightly less (17.9%), college administrators. Primarily, then, these political scientists were instructors with few responsibilities in adminstrative areas.

Holders of the Doctorate

Currently, one of the big concerns in post secondary education is what to do with people holding the doctorate who are flooding the employment market. Accordingly, chairpersons were asked several questions about employing people with the advanced degree. Despite the fact that the law/government sample of chairpersons is extremely small (8.6%), as compared with 14.9% chairpersons in the total humanities faculty, it is interesting

to note that most had previously employed instructors who held the doctorate, had not felt administrative pressure to either hire or not hire these people, planned to hire such individuals in the future, and, for the most part, considered doctorate holders to be most capable and knowledgeable. In most cases, however, they said they would hire the best candidate, regardless of degree.

Satisfaction and Reference Groups

Much has been written about hours spent in teaching--as if this figure were the clue to all sorts of things from satisfaction to loyalty toward an institution. Yet no relationship was found in this survey between satisfaction and hours per week spent in teaching. Thirteen-fifteen hours was ranked first by both the total population and the law/government subset, 10-12 hours second, and 16-18 hours third.

The extent to which respondents, five years hence, would choose to continue in their present activities is another indicator of satisfaction. Forty-one point seven percent of the political science instructors (as compared with 37.9% of the total), reported that doing what they were currently doing would seem very attractive. At the same time, 36.7% felt their present positions would be only somewhat attractive, and 12.9% saw them as unattractive. Next in line of "very attractive" is a faculty position at a four-year college or university and third, a faculty position in another community or junior college. On this basis, the political science people appear to be satisfied with a teaching career, particularly at their present or another two-year institution.

Group Consistency

Consistency between groups of instructors is quite apparent in the number of full-time instructors (75%) comprising both the total sample and the law/government group, the numbers who were currently employed in a job in addition to their position at the sampled institution (28.8% law/government and 26.4% total), and in the numbers of hours so employed (the most popular for both groups being 1-20 and 31-40). And in an area concerning the reference group as role model, only slight discrepancies are evidenced between the total sample and the law/government population in terms of whom they would see as quite useful sources of advice on teaching (tabulated below).

RANK ORDERINGS OF EIGHT REFERENCE GROUPS SEEN BY LAW/GOVERNMENT FACULTY AS "QUITE USEFUL" SOURCES OF ADVICE ON TEACHING

1. Colleagues
2. Students
3. Department Chairpersons
4. Professional Journals
5. University Professors
6. Programs of Professional Organizations
7. Administrators
8. High School Teachers

In light of these consistencies between the two groups--people teaching political science and the larger humanities sample--it is not surprising that high agreement also pertains to attitudes toward faculty

development. Over 80% of the respondents reported that within the next five years they would like to take steps toward professional development. The greatest number (33.8% total; 39.1% law/government) would like to get a Ph.D. or Ed.D., while enrolling in university courses appealed to 32.4% of the total and 27.0% of the political scientists; in-service courses at their colleges was next most popular. As for the type of training they would seek were they to begin all over, most respondents felt they would select the same training; next in order of considerations were "study humanities" and "take more psychology and/or personal development courses."

What would these same instructors do if they had a free summer? By far most of the subject specialty groups chose travel first. The next highest choice for both the law/government people and the total group was meeting classes, doing research, or attending workshops, while taking classes/reading/studying came in for a close third.

Affiliation to Groups

It is interesting to note that the law/government respondents do not seem to be joiners or overly involved in activities of professional organizations. Whereas 22.5% of the total population reported they do not belong to any professional organizations and 54.9% did not attend a regional or national meeting in the past three years, 30.2% and 59% of the political scientists so responded, respectively. This preponderant lack of interest in joining may be reflected also in their relationships with significant others in their lives. They fell slightly below the total humanities sample in their score of relatedness to other instructors in their field, most instructors at their school, teacher organizations, and

students. They felt more affiliated with their group of friends and college administrators.

Concern with Students

Although they may not be highly related to students, law/government instructors do have definite opinions about what qualities students should gain from a two-year college education. In order of importance, most feel their students should receive knowledge of and interest in community and world problems, self-knowledge and a personal identity, preparation for further formal education, knowledge and skills directly applicable to their careers, an understanding and mastery of some academic discipline, and, of least importance, aesthetic awareness. The majority also feel that students in two-year occupational programs should take at least four and preferably six humanities courses, and that too few colloquiums, seminars, concerts, and recitals are presented as non-course offerings in the humanities. Like their counterparts in other fields, in addition to their teaching they experience the humanities by reading, visiting museums, and attending concerts, theatres, and films. Again like others, they indicate that the only changes in the humanities that have taken place in their colleges in the past seven years are the addition and/or improvement of humanities courses. Interestingly, these are also the changes they would most like to see effected.

The Colleges

Most (91.4%) political scientists teach in public institutions. Most of the colleges are comprehensive, built in or before 1959, and house between 5000-7499 students, with schools of 10,000-14,999 and 15,000

and larger running close seconds and thirds. Most are single campus institutions.

In Sum

These, then, are the characteristics of people teaching political science in two-year colleges throughout the nation. While the actual number of survey respondents falling into this teaching field was small (N=139, or 9% of the 1493 total) the sample was so carefully drawn (see Cohen, 1975*) and the response rate so high (84.0%) that the data are seen to be generalizable to the total universe of two-year college political scientists. And while for the most part there are few surprises, these instructors being very much like other community/junior college humanities faculty members, sufficient differences prevail to make the results both interesting and potentially useful for curriculum planning and faculty development programs.

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* Cohen, Arthur M. "A Procedure for Maximizing Responses to a Nationwide Faculty Survey." Single copies free on request from the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1047 Gayley Ave., Los Angeles, California 90024.